United Nations

Press Release

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Preliminary mission to assess conditions for United Nations observance of cease-fire agreement between Government and Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional to go to El Salvador.

+ Commission composed by Italian authorities and representatives of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to begin interviews of Albanian asylum seekers to see whether they qualify for refugee status.

+ International Committee of the Red Cross steps up humanitarian assistance in Iraq.

+ Secretary-General of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development calls for special concerted effort to meet all reconstruction needs in Gulf region.

+ Secretary-General names Director-General of Vienna Office as coordinator of activities relating to Chernobyl.

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A preliminary 10-day mission to assess conditions for the establishment of a United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador will leave Headquarters tomorrow, Wednesday.

The Secretary-General's spokesman told correspondents today that the preliminary mission would present recommendations for an operational plan for establishing a United Nations mission to verify the cease-fire agreement between the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) signed at San Jose, Costa Rica, on 26 July 1990.

The preparatory mission will also present an assessment of the extent to which the verification of the agreement can be conducted in the absence of a cease-fire. It will be headed by Iqbal Riza, Director in the Office of the Secretary-General, and will include human rights experts and military and police advisers. While in El Salvador it will be assisted by the Chief of the small Preparatory Office established in January.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

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A spokeswoman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced today in Geneva that a commission composed of Italian officials and UNHCR staff was due to begin interviewing Albanian asylum seekers to see whether they qualified for refugee status.

The emphasis was now being placed on helping Albanian asylum seekers, many of whom were in poor physical condition, she said, adding that interviews would be carried out as their health improved.

According to a United Nations press officer in Geneva, almost 20,000 Albanians had arrived in Brindisi, Italy, by sea in recent weeks. Many remained in temporary shelters; some had been hospitalized. She said UNHCR's representative in Rome and Italy's Deputy Prime Minister went to Brindisi yesterday for an on-the-spot assessment of the situation. The two had confirmed, she said, that the 1,500 to 2,000 people who left Italy had done so voluntarily and that they would not be punished once they returned to Albania.

The press officer said that 1,500 Albanians of Yugoslav origin arrived in Yugoslavia in recent days and had been accepted there. Further, 1,200 Albanians of non-Yugoslav origin were seeking asylum in that country, she said.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced today that its objectives for the coming weeks would be to expand its humanitarian activities both in Baghdad and in other parts of Iraq. The Committee said it was working in close cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent and with the agreement of the Iraqi authorities. The medical and sanitary needs of the civilian population would be given priority, the Red Cross said, especially with regard to the most vulnerable groups, such as the sick and wounded, children and the elderly.

So far, eight convoys had carried more than 500 tons of emergency relief supplies to Iraq, the Committee said.

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The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Kenneth Dadzie, has called for a special concerted effort to meet all reconstruction needs in the Gulf region, whether resulting from the recent war or from previous crises and natural calamities.

Addressing the Trade and Development Board's thirty-seventh session which began yesterday in Geneva, Mr. Dadzie said that a new vision was needed in the Middle East -- time had come to view the region in a wider geographical context.

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He proposed a forum to develop economic links in the region, which he said could be funded from national savings, the progressive reduction in military expenditure and external finance.

The UNCTAD Secretary-General also called for appropriate domestic and international action to help other countries adversely affected by the Gulf crisis. This included stronger reform efforts, international cooperation to stimulate vigorous world economic growth, lower interest rates as well as large-scale multilateral financial assistance based on strictly economic criteria. Mr. Dadzie also stressed the importance of dealing with oil-price volatility, preferably through joint efforts by producers and consumers.

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The Secretary-General has entrusted to Margaret J. Anstee, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna and Head of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the responsibility for coordinating all activities relating to Chernobyl.

The General Assembly adopted last year a resolution entitled "International cooperation to address and mitigate the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant", by which the Secretary-General was asked to coordinate United Nations activities in that regard. He was also asked to establish a task force responsible for stimulating and monitoring such activities and to appeal for voluntary contributions to complement the regular budgetary resources.

Miss Anstee has now established a core secretariat in her office, which is working full-time on activities relating to the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident.

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